

Commencement delayed, not denied

*By Tech. Sgt. Andre Nicholson
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The Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (USU) is a place of learning that extends not only to medical, nursing, and graduate students, but also to the support staff.

Five of those enlisted members proved just how true that is when they received their

Bachelor of Science degrees from Southern Illinois University Carbondale (SIUC), Friday.

HM1 Araya Amdetsyon; Sgt. 1st Class Susan Boylan; Staff Sgt. Thomas Echelmeyer; HM1 Muhammad Hassan; and HM1 Jason Wright, each received their degrees in Health Care Management during a secondary commencement ceremony held in Sanford Auditorium.

Due to other mission-essential duty obligations, the five enlisted members were unable to attend the regularly scheduled graduation earlier in the summer, so SIUC arranged a secondary graduation in their honor, explained Charles Rice, M.D., USU president, during his welcoming address. “However, a graduation briefly delayed is not a graduation denied.”



Photo by Tom Balfour

(Left to right) Sgt. 1st Class Susan Boylan; Staff Sgt. Thomas Echelmeyer; HM1 Muhammad Hassan; HM1 Jason Wright; and HM1 Araya Amdetsyon, each received their Bachelor of Science degree in Health Care Management from Southern Illinois University Carbondale, during a secondary commencement ceremony in their honor, Friday.

Each graduate had individual challenges to overcome while pursuing their degree, but in the end perseverance paid off.

HM1 Amdetsyon, a Santa Monica, Calif., native, is married with three children and has been assigned to USU for three years. “It was a challenge at times,” HM1 Amdetsyon said. “I had to balance school, family, and work. But, once I got use to it, the time went by fast.”

Although the students received their degrees, the educational track doesn’t end here for some.

HM1 Muhammad Hassan from San Bernardino, Calif., is married with two children and has been at USU for two years. “I feel relieved that I’ve earned my degree, but the journey to medical school isn’t finished,” he said. “It was more tedious than it was difficult, but you just have to keep chipping away at it in order to get to where you want to be.”

The commencement guest speaker Judith Rawls, Ph.D., Director, Off-Campus Academic Programs for SIUC, spoke to the graduates about being successful and what it takes to be a SIUC Saluki (the school mascot).

“A Saluki understands what it is to be successful in life,” she said. “They cannot sit idly by and wait for things to come to them.”

“Salukis have essence of character. Your true character is revealed by the choices you make. What you say and do define who you are, and who you are, you are forever.”

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Judith Rawls, Ph.D., Southern Illinois University Carbondale, Director of Off-Campus Academic Programs, provided the commencement address during the secondary graduation for five enlisted staff members.

Photo by Tom Balfour